31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1962
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

When news of the sex-experiences of youths and maids reaches the ears of their parents, they are sometimes rebuked. The mother warns the girl of untoward consequences and the boy's father may look for a bride for his son. But generally, as an educated Santal told us, the parents of boys do not bother very much about these things and treat the escapades as lightly as a dance or a drink.

Women and sex-life

With abundant facilities for social intercourse with men, it is but natural that women's sex-life should take the hetero-sexual turn early in their lives. But any description of Santal women's love-life will be incomplete without reference to their early friendships with members of their own sex. The society, we have already seen in our chapter of "Kinship Organisation" (page 149) favours the formation of artificial relationships like *Phul patao, Karamdiar, Kiya Phul* between girls, in which there is, very frequently, a strong emotional basis. Such 'flames' eat together, talk together and even sleep together, if possible. Sex-psychologists will readily ascribe a homo-sexual background for such attractions, when lovers of the same sex swear eternal fidelity in friendship till death do them part. Such friendships are almost rituals with some Santals, but it will be very difficult to trace any case of perversion

Jt Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

572 838 arising out of such ties and Santals are emphatic that there are no cases of homo-sexual aberrations.

836 In sex-life, unmarried women, divorcees and widows enjoy equal freedom with men to cohabit with men of their choice, barring of course the prohibited degrees of marriage and the clan rules of exogamy. But excessive cases are taken notice of [848] by parents and superiors, and if pregnancy results, village elders step in to find out the man responsible. Very frequently such scandals are avoided by a marriage between the parties.

837 The Santal hates adultery. If a married woman cohabits with others, she is taken to task by her parents and her husband's people. Generally, such erring wives are divorced by the husband. Serious crimes like murders sometimes result from such offences and we remember an educated Santal nonchalantly blurting out, "if my wife commits adultery, I shall cut her into pieces." The following 837 folk-s ng contains the news of such an illicit union 533 being conveyed to a maternal uncle by his ne- 539 phew:—

Nephew: Eh mama, mamago, hatòmiñdo perkao akan.

Uncle: Nowa katha sakhi bhagna bin purao lekham.
Hopon bohok're capò hòcòbin.

31 Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1952
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

interests engross the entire attention of the Santals as a tribe. It is vitally linked up with the economic problem, and when there is a bumper crop and the flowers are full of honey, drinking, dancing and mating flow free with the abanbon characteristic of the tribe. 831

The Santal, even today, is a most prolific race. They cannot at all imagine how a normal man or woman can remain unmarried. We have already seen how the bachelor is looked upon as a pitiable thing by the tribe. If there is such a person nearabout, all Santals try to see him married. Often men and women of the sexually frigid type fall to matrimony, as otherwise, they would be considered as "maica" (hermaphrodite). Similarly, unmarried widows are encouraged to marry and should they stick to a single life, their joking relations make her a butt of ridicule. Even the most Hinduised of the Santals opined that widows without children should marry as soon as possible. So, bachelors are very rare amongst the Santals. An educated Santal told us that he has seen only two such, aged 40/45, in his village. They are the sports of the village. He has not seen an old maid. A Sirdar told us that the only confirmed bachelor in his area wears the dress of a woman (certainly a hermaphrodite.) He has never, in his experience, seen a Santal old maid. An old Santal said that he 581 589 [838]

3i Mukherjea O. Y-4,5 (ca. 1933-1939) 1902
AW42 Santal AW42
MAYURBHANJ

833 fixed at once a day, till they arrive at their sixtieth year. All these are considered nothing unusual and such intercourse is not considered as too frequent.

[841] As regards ritual continence, coitus is stopped during menstruation for a period of seven days or [843] so. During pregnancy, the Santal gives up sexual intercourse when the woman is about her fifth month and resumes it about the third month after child-birth.

838 So far as the prevalence and censure of sexual deviations are concerned, we gathered that homo-sexuality is almost unknown amongst the Santals.

839 Masturbation is sometimes indulged in by boys while tending cows in the fields, but not much of attention is paid to these, as such cases are rare. Bestiality and sodomy are hated as abhorrent to human nature. Should such cases occur, the guilty ones are fined and a formal purification ceremony takes place. A Ṭika Murmu offers pujas to Maraṅ Buru and parties previously outcasted are taken back to the tribal-fold after the penance.

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